Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: PRESS COMMENTS ON STRANDED PANAM PASSENGERS

REF: THE HAGUE 3627

1. AS ANTICIPATED, THE DUTCH PRESS HAS HAD A FIELD DAY WITH PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED WITH PANAM'S LOW FARE SERVICE BETWEEN BOSTON AND AMSTERDAM. THE FOLLOWING SUMMARY COVERS SOME OF THE ITEMS CURRENTLY APPEARING IN THE DUTCH PRESS:

2. PANAM'S CHEAP STANDBY FLIGHTS ON AMSTERDAM-BOSTON ROUTE ARE CREATING CHAOS BOTH IN AMSTERDAM AND IN BOSTON. UNDER THE ARRANGEMENT PASSENGERS COULD FLY TO BOSTON FOR 115 GUILDERS AND BACK TO AMSTERDAM FOR 99 DOLLARS. THE CHEAP RATE WAS TO LAST UNTIL JULY 15 BUT PANAM CANCELLED THE SCHEME ON JULY 3 WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT. THE FLIGHT FROM BOSTON TO AMSTERDAM WILL NOW COST 155 DOLLARS AND A RETURN FLIGHT FROM AMSTERDAM 645 GUILDERS. PASSENGERS WHO ARE ON THE WAITING LIST WILL STILL FLY AT THE OLD RATE.

3. ACCORDING TO A FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN, SOME 30 DUTCH PEOPLE ARE STILL WAITING AT BOSTON AIRPORT FOR A RETURN TICKET AND THE NUMBER IS EXPECTED TO GROW CONSIDERABLY IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS.
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THERE ARE 1,200 PEOPLE WAITING AT SCHIPHOL AIRPORT AND SOME 2,700 IN BOSTON, MOSTLY AMERICANS. THE DUTCH CONSUL GENERAL IN BOSTON IS OFFERING FINANCIAL HELP TO THE STRANDED PASSENGERS.

4. THE DUTCH MARTINAIR CHARTER COMPANY HAS SCHEDULED A SPECIAL FLIGHT FROM NEW YORK TO AMSTERDAM FOR 100 DOLLARS ON JULY 7 TO TAKE THE STRANDED PASSENGERS HOME. MARTINIAR'S PRESIDENT MARTIN

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SCHROEDER CRITICIZED PANAM'S STANDBY FLIGHTS AS ILL-CONSIDERED AND CARELESS AND THE DUTCH GOVERNMENT FOR HAVING ALLOWED INTRODUCTION OF CUT-THROAT RATES. HE SAID THAT MARTINAIR AND OTHER CHARTER COMPANIES HAVE BEEN HIT BY THE MOVE AND THAT BOOKINGS FOR FLIGHTS FROM THE U.S. TO THE NETHERLANDS WERE STAGNATING.

5. A SPOKESMAN OF THE NETHERLANDS STATE AVIATION SERVICE (RLD), MR. SCHREURS, CALLED THE PRESENT RATES RIDICULOUS AND UNREAL. HE SAID THE EXPERIMENT PROVED THAT THE STANDBY FLIGHTS SHOULD BE BETTER ORGANIZED BEFOREHAND. HE NOTED THAT THE SYSTEM OF WAITING-LISTS DID NOT CORRESPOND WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF A STANDBY SERVICE. THE RLD IS NOT PLANNING TO ALLOW PANAM TO FLY BOEING 747'S ON THE BOSTON-AMSTERDAM ROUTE. PANAM, WHICH IS FLYING THE ROUTE WITH A BOEING 707, HAS MEANWHILE FILED A SECOND APPLICATION TO FLY 747'S. MR. SCHREURS SAID THAT THE RLD WILL PROBABLY NOT OBJECT TO THE USE OF A SINGLE 747 TO COLLECT ALL STRANDED PASSENGERS.

6. SCHIPHOL AIRPORT MANAGER STAPEL SAID THE SITUATION HAD BECOME UNTENABLE. MOST STRANDED PASSENGERS ARE SLEEPING IN THE DEPARTURE HALL AND HINDERING CLEANERS AND OFFICE PERSONNEL. HE WILL SHORTLY DISCUSS THE SITUATION WITH A PANAM REPRESENTATIVE. THE STRANDED DUTCH PASSENGERS IN BOSTON ARE INDIGNANT ABOUT PANAM'S "PUBLICITY STUNT". THEY ACCUSE PANAM OF GIVING PRIORITY TO AMERICAN PASSENGERS. AN EDITORIAL IN THE DAILY ALGEMEEN DAGBLAD SAYS THAT NEITHER PANAM NOR THE STATE AVIATION SERVICE ARE TO BE BLAMED FOR THE CHAOS. THE PAPER SAYS THAT PANAM HAS
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BEEN SURPRISED BY THE ENORMOUS INTEREST AND MIGHT AT BEST HAVE BEEN EXPECTED TO SEEK PERMISSION TO FLY THE ROUTE WITH BIGGER AIRCRAFT. "IT HAS BECOME CLEAR, AT ANY RATE, THAT THERE WAS A SIMMERING NEED FOR AIR TRANSPORT WITHOUT ANY FRINGES", THE PAPER NOTED.
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